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Who Wrote It? A Fad In Political Comment Is Using Pseudonyms

Cryptic 'Iron Mountain' Book
Is Written by a 'John Doe';
'Americus' Criticizes LBJ

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NEW YORK—The book is expensive for its size (200 and 100 pages) and the title sounds like a report from Iron Mountain on the Possibility and Desirability of Peace. But it is pre-publication sensation.

No wonder. Iron Mountain purports to be a high-level, once-secret Government study of war and peace. Its chilling conclusion is that continuation of war is "indispensable" to the stability of our society and possibly even to its survival.

But the real focus of controversy is the author—"John Doe." He is described as an eminent social scientist who was clandestinely recruited to serve on the special study commission. The writing is authoritatively bureaucratic but quietly preposterous as it concludes that an outbreak of peace would be disastrous. The Guessing Game

Who is John Doe? John Kenneth Galbraith? Mr. Galbraith says no. Then is it Kenneth E. Boulding the economics professor? He also denies authorship. Whether hoax, satire or authentic, Mr. Doe's work is but the most recent in a wave of pseudonymous political commentary.

Iron Mountain implicitly takes to task all the nuclear planners and Doomsday thinkers. But much of the pseudonymous political writing has been sharply partisan. In the Oct. 28 issue of the New Republic, for instance, a "well-known historian" identified as Americus suggests hopefully that President Johnson could be defeated if dissident Democrats oppose him strongly and if Republicans run a candidate "attuned to the electorate."

Mr. Johnson is the target again in the Sept. 16 issue of the New Yorker, where a writer with the pseudonym of Bailey Laird argues through a mythical Democratic leader called Daley Unruh that the President has little appeal to the average voter.

Much of the gossip in publishing would have it that Bailey Laird is Richard N. Goodwin, formerly a speechwriter for Mr. Johnson. But Mr. Goodwin says no. "I've denied that steadily," he complains. "But no one wants to believe it."

In fact, while others are speculating about Mr. Goodwin, he is busy pondering the identity of Americus. Could it be Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., another former White House aide? "I doubt that it's Arthur," Mr. Goodwin decides. "He would have told me." Historian Eric Goldman, yet another erstwhile White House aide, is Mr. Goodwin's candidate.

The Man and the Name

Matching the man with the pseudonym—ruling out contenders—is hazardous. For one thing, the disavowals tend to be ambiguous. Mr. Galbraith, former U.S. Ambassador to India and now a Harvard University professor more or less denies that he wrote Iron Mountain. "Some things are so removed from reality that they can't be commented on," he says.

Mr. Goodwin is convinced that "anyone who thinks he has more freedom to write under a pseudonym is crazy, because that kind of secret can't be kept." And Harold Hayes, editor of Esquire magazine, adds, "Nothing is written that's so hot that it couldn't go under an author's own name."

Nonetheless, Esquire is publishing a 28,000 word excerpt of the pseudonymous Iron Mountain Report. "We think it's an important piece," Mr. Hayes says.

Publishing sources speedily recall that Mr. Galbraith had written pseudonymously for Esquire before, as Mark Epernay. And Mr. Galbraith reportedly is to write a book review of the Iron Mountain Report using the name Herschel McLandress.

Herschel McLandress is the fictional subject of the articles written by Mark Epernay. But, from behind an apparently impenetrable thicket of pseudonymity, Mr. Galbraith seems determined to evade the question of whether or not he authored the writings at issue.

"The only reason for using a pseudonym is to disguise one's identity," he says, accurately enough.

Dial Press, which will publish Iron Mountain Nov. 30, is running out 25,000 copies, a large initial printing for a specialized book. It contains a 20-page foreword by Leonard Lewin, a freelance writer who says he received the book from Mr. Doe and brought it to Dial.

For this Mr. Lewin is receiving all the author's royalties, according to Dial Press, but he denies being John Doe. (Mr. Lewin readily concedes, however that he has used the pseudonym L. L. Case in the past for satirical articles.)

Political pseudonymity has a long, distinguished history. The most celebrated example in modern American times is the 1947 article proposing containment of the Soviet Union,

written by George F. Kennan, then in the State Department, as Mr. X.

The magazine in which it appeared, Foreign Affairs, was called to account recently on the morality of disguising an author's identity. Foreign Affairs published an article about the Vietcong, identifying the author as George A. Carver Jr., a student of political theory and Asian affairs.

The magazine neglected to mention that Mr. Carver is employed by the Central Intelligence Agency. Sen. J. William Fulbright and historian Henry Steele Commager, among others, bitterly criticized this as an instance of unethical propagandizing by the CIA.

"I think we made a mistake," says Philip W. Quigg, managing editor of Foreign Affairs. "It would have been better to give him a pseudonym and let it go at that." Some critics say this would have been an even greater deception. (Mr. Quigg says the CIA was "adamant" in its refusal to have the author identified fully.)

Disguising a CIA man's identity, Mr. Commager says, is immoral because "it would fool readers into thinking the article is an honest, scholarly work." The only pseudonymity he condones is when a writer feels he must criticize his contemporaries or even close friends, and doesn't want to bruise personal feelings.

Some observers think the pseudonym is in vogue simply because people enjoy speculating who is eviscerating whom. One guessing game involved a critic of defense policy who withholds his identity but leaves no doubt about his convictions. He uses the pseudonym Raymond D. Senter (dissenter).

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P. DOE, JOHN

- GALBRAITH, JOHN KENNETH